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AFGHANISTAN: EUROPEAN INVOLVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding its decision to end its military combat mission in Afghanistan by 2011, Canada remains deeply involved as a key contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in addition to pursuing an ambitious aid and reconstruction mission. Canada's policies and commitments are part of a broader international effort to achieve security and the reconstruction, development, and democratization of Afghanistan. The continued engagement of the international community is crucial if these goals are to be met. This paper offers a brief overview of the involvement of the European Union (EU) and key European countries and their approaches to the international mission.[1]

CONTEXT

A. Afghanistan in European Foreign Policies

European countries are making significant contributions to diplomatic, military, reconstruction and development assistance efforts in Afghanistan. However, national foreign

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[1] This paper draws heavily on official government, NATO and European Union websites, as well as on Vincent Morelli and Paul Belkin, "NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance," Congressional Research Service, 3 December 2009, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33627.pdf.

- Information about the International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan is available on the ISAF website, at http://www.nato.int/isaf/. Up-to-date information about troop contributions to ISAF by country is available at NATO HQ Media Operations Centre – Afghanistan, "International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army Strength and Laydown," http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf [NATO HQ].
- Please note that, as stated in the NATO HQ document, "troop numbers are based on broad contribution and do not reflect the exact numbers on the ground at any one time." Therefore, numbers on the ISAF website may differ from those on national government websites.
- Casualty figures are from Operation Enduring Freedom, http://icasualties.org/OEF/index.aspx.
- Official development assistance statistics are from government websites, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (e.g., OECD DAC, *2006 Development Assistance Report*, 2007, Table 32), and Delegation of the European Commission to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *The EU Blue Book 2009: The EU and Afghanistan*, available at http://www.delafg.ec.europa.eu/en/downloadable_documents/EUBlueBookAfg_2009.pdf.

policies in several European countries and the approach taken by the EU differ from those of Canada and the United States for at least two reasons. First, while Europeans may see Afghanistan as a key security and foreign policy challenge *outside* Europe, priorities closer to home are more pressing.

Chief among these is Kosovo, which declared its independence in February 2008 amid concerns about the consequences for regional stability. The European Union and its member states are heavily invested in this region, where they provide substantial financial and technical assistance, policing and military forces, and they are planning to retain a significant military and police presence there for years to come. EU members provide almost 80% of the 12,600 soldiers deployed as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). Contributors include Germany, with over 2,400 troops, and Italy and France, with about 1,800 and 1,200 troops respectively. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which are also discussed later in this paper, each deploy 8. Canada is contributing 6 soldiers. The KFOR mission has been supported by the EU's EULEX Rule of Law Mission, which currently numbers 1,607 international police, judges and administrators. In addition, the EU runs the international mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR – Althea) – currently 1,953 troops among whom 300 are Italian, 129 German, 73 Dutch, 9 British and 4 French – as well as the EUPM police mission (130 police officers and civilians from EU countries).[2]

The second reason for a divergence between North American and European approaches is a profound scepticism in Europe among the general public and many politicians about international efforts to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. In part, this appears to stem from the fact that many Europeans view Afghanistan primarily in the context of the US-led war on terrorism, which is widely regarded as failing because of a perceived focus on military efforts. In addition, there has been a concern that the past strategy lacked sensitivity to the cultural, ethnic and historical specificities of Afghanistan. It remains to be seen how the new population-centric strategy adopted by ISAF will change these perceptions.

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2 Troop and civilian personnel numbers cited have been drawn from the European Rule of Law Mission – EULUX Kosovo website, http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?id=1; the NATO Kosovo Force website, http://www.nato.int/kfor/; and the EUFOR – Althea website, http://www.euforbih.org/eufor/.

Despite these differences, European decision-makers have shown a commitment to provide significant levels of assistance to Afghanistan. In particular, there is strong support for initiatives to promote the protection of human rights – specifically women's rights – at least by the European Parliament and the public. However, there is widespread opposition in many European countries to the involvement of their troops in combat operations, particularly in southern Afghanistan. This opposition has resulted in some differences over national limits on operations, referred to as "national caveats."

B. European Contributions and Approaches

1. European Union

The EU itself – as distinct from its member states – does not currently have the mandate or capabilities to contribute to military operations in Afghanistan.[3] NATO (also known as the "Atlantic Alliance") and the EU have developed a close, cooperative relationship aimed at avoiding duplication or competition between the Alliance and the evolving European Security and Defence Policy. This means that in areas where NATO is not (or is no longer) directly engaged through a military mission, the EU can take the lead, running the mission in close coordination and cooperation with NATO. For example, drawing on NATO's assets and planning, the EU took over responsibility from NATO in 2004 for the international military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The military involvement in Afghanistan by EU member states is significant: 25 of the 27 EU members contribute to the 43-nation, NATO-led ISAF mission, accounting for 30,479 – or 36% of 84,150 – troops deployed as of December 2009. The EU and its members have also made a considerable contribution in other areas. Collectively, they "accounted for about 30% of the $12.5 billion in grants pledged by the international community for Afghan reconstruction at international conferences in Tokyo (2002) and Berlin (2004). At the London Conference (2006), the European Community and member states pledged a further USD 2.4 billion … for reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan over the coming years."[4] The European Commission (EC)

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[3] Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following websites: European Commission – External Relations, "Afghanistan," http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/afghanistan/intro/index.htm; Delegation of the European Union, "Country Strategy Paper for Afghanistan," http://www.delafg.ec.europa.eu/en/_eu_afghanistan/country_strategy.htm; and the Delegation of the European Commission to Afghanistan, http://www.delafg.ec.europa.eu/.

[4] European Union, *European Union at the United Nations*, "EU Presidency Statement – United Nations Plenary: Situation in Afghanistan," New York, 5 November 2007, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_7475_en.htm.

alone spent approximately C$2.06 billion from 2002–2008 and C$315 million in 2008. During this period the EC was the second largest donor of official development assistance (ODA) committed to Afghanistan. The country is the EC's sixth largest aid recipient (after Turkey, Serbia, Ethiopia, the Palestinian Administered Areas, and Morocco).

In 2007, the EC adopted a new Country Strategy Paper for Afghanistan for 2007-2013, which states that "the guiding principles for EC assistance will be to utilise Government structures wherever this is feasible in implementing programmes and to provide continued support to existing national programmes."[5] The strategy provides that EC assistance will focus on areas where the EC has expertise and experience or where other donors are not engaged. The "focal areas" specified in the strategy are rural development, governance and health. "Non-focal areas" are social protection, landmine clearance and regional cooperation, while "cross-cutting" issues are human rights and civil society (including gender and media issues), and environmental concerns.[6] In June 2007, the EU set up a new EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL), which builds on Germany's police training programs. The mission has been plagued by difficulties recruiting qualified personnel. Relations with NATO have been strained by problems in the EU's relations with Turkey. As late as fall 2008 critics alleged that no Afghan police had been trained and that only half the personnel committed to the mission had been deployed. EU officials have expressed a willingness to continue with the mission and possibly double its size from the current 177 international and 91 local staff.[7]

2. United Kingdom

The British government strongly supports the ISAF mission and a more assertive approach to stabilization efforts.[8] It has backed its commitment with significant troop deployments

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5 European Commission, *Country Strategy Paper: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007–2013*, p. 19, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/afghanistan/csp/07_13_en.pdf.

6 Ibid., Executive summary.

7 Morelli and Belkin (2009).

8 Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following UK government websites and documents: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Global Issues*, "The UK effort in Afghanistan," http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/global-issues/conflict-prevention/afghanistan/uk-effort-in-afghanistan/; Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Afghanistan*, http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/InDepth/OperationsInAfghanistan.htm; Department for International Development, *Afghanistan*, http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/afghanistan.asp; House of Commons Defence Committee, *UK operations in Afghanistan: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2006–07*, October 2007, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmdfence/1024/1024.pdf.

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and development assistance funding. In many ways, the approach taken by the government of the United Kingdom is similar to that of the Canadian government: both believe that democratization, good governance and development cannot be achieved without security, and that security requires robust military capabilities and combat operations. In keeping with this view, both have simultaneously invested heavily in military, development, governance, and diplomatic efforts. As in Canada, there are no constitutional or legal requirements in the United Kingdom for a parliamentary mandate to send troops abroad.

The United Kingdom is second to the United States with respect to troop contributions to ISAF. Currently, 9,500 British personnel are deployed to Afghanistan as part of the ISAF mission, up from 7,700 in 2008. Most British ISAF troops belong to combat units and are deployed in the southern Helmand province, the main poppy-growing region of Afghanistan. The United Kingdom has the lead in ISAF counter-narcotics efforts and has run the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Helmand since May 2006. It previously led PRTs in Mazar-e-Sharif (2002–2006) and Meymana (2002–2005), both in northern Afghanistan. The United Kingdom also provides service personnel to the headquarters of ISAF and of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), both located in Kabul. Two hundred fifty-one British Forces personnel and Ministry civilians have died while serving in Afghanistan since October 2001.

The United Kingdom has played a central role in international efforts to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan. According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom has spent about C$1.215 billion over the past eight years on development assistance. At the London Conference hosted by the British government in January 2010, the Department for International Development announced a multiyear commitment of C$118 million to support programs focused on improving governance (training 12,000 local and provincial civil servants) and assisting farmers in Helmand province.[9] After the United States, the United Kingdom is Afghanistan's second largest bilateral donor. Aid is projected to total C$854.9 million over the next four years. Afghanistan is the third largest recipient of UK bilateral aid, accounting for 2.3% of British ODA in 2008–2009.

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9 [UK] Department for International Development, "New Support for Afghanistan," News release, 28 January 2010, http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Press-releases/2010/New-support-for-Afghanistan/.

3. Netherlands

In taking an "integrated approach" to its engagement in Afghanistan, the Dutch government has also pursued policies that are in many ways similar to those of the Canadian government.[10] The Netherlands has argued: "Security and stability are essential conditions for development. That is why the Netherlands believes that in conflict-prone regions, development programmes are not enough. They need to be combined with action on the political, military and economic fronts. This integrated approach (Defence, Development and Diplomacy) is crucial to achieving lasting peace, security and development."[11] Dutch support for a more robust engagement is reflected in the government's decision in early 2006 to send up to 1,700 troops to the southern Uruzgan province as part of ISAF, initially for a two-year period. The Dutch government must inform Parliament before it deploys armed forces abroad, although it does not require a formal parliamentary mandate.

When the Dutch government considered deploying combat troops as part of the ISAF mission in southern Afghanistan in 2005–2006, many politicians expressed serious concern that engagement in combat operations would compromise the ability of Dutch forces to win support among Afghans for their reconstruction efforts.

In late November 2007, despite significant public opposition, the government decided to extend the Dutch mission for about two years. This decision followed offers from several European NATO countries to provide assistance. In January 2009, the mission was once again extended, but with an understanding that the current deployment to Uruzgan would end in August 2010.

As of 22 December 2009, the Netherlands had 1,950 troops in Afghanistan. Most of these personnel are part of ISAF's PRT in Uruzgan, for which the Netherlands assumed responsibility in August 2006. Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands rotate as lead nation of ISAF's Regional Command South in Kandahar, where they take turns providing the commander and the bulk of the staff. The Dutch military currently has, in addition to ground forces, an Apache helicopter detachment and a Chinook and F-16 detachment in southern Afghanistan. The latter is based in Kandahar and supports both the ISAF and the OEF missions.

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10 Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following Netherlands government websites: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Afghanistan*, http://www.minbuza.nl/en/Key_Topics/Afghanistan; and Defensie [Ministry of Defence], *ISAF – Afghanistan*, http://www.defensie.nl/missies/afghanistan.

11 [Netherlands] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Netherlands in Afghanistan," Newsletter No. 10, 1 September 2007.

The Netherlands also has about 250 troops serving in Kabul and northern Afghanistan. Since October 2001, 21 Dutch military personnel have died while serving in Afghanistan.

On the diplomatic front, the Dutch government has advocated a strategic, regional approach that calls for the Alliance to engage Pakistan, India and Iran, the key countries in the region. The Netherlands has contributed significant resources to reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan. Dutch development aid spending in Afghanistan since 2006 has tallied to C$369 million and is expected to reach C$599 million by 2011. Bilateral aid to Afghanistan accounted for 1.5% of Dutch ODA in 2007–2008, making Afghanistan the sixth largest recipient country of Dutch bilateral aid. Since 2001, the Netherlands has provided emergency assistance and supported the Afghan government through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). It helped organize the parliamentary and presidential elections, and has supported the fight against opium production and trafficking as well as the work of aid organizations in landmine clearance.

4. Germany

As well as being an important player on the diplomatic front, Germany has been one of the largest contributors of military personnel and development assistance to international efforts in Afghanistan.[12] Insofar as the German government has adopted a comprehensive "civil–military approach," arguing that both of these elements are necessary and complementary prerequisites for reconstruction and development, Germany's position on what the international community needs to do to bring security, good governance and development is broadly similar to that of its major allies. However, Germany has been widely criticized for its unwillingness to contribute to ISAF combat missions, in particular in eastern and southern Afghanistan, for what many consider to be the inadequate capabilities of its ISAF forces, and for imposing some of the most restrictive national caveats of ISAF contributing nations.

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12 Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following German government websites and documents: Die Bundesregierung [Federal Government], *Afghanistan*, http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Afghanistan/afghanistan.html; Auswärtiges Amt [Federal Foreign Office], *Afghanistan*, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/Afghanistan/Uebersicht.html; Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, http://www.bmz.de/en/index.html; [UK] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK and Afghanistan*, "Outcomes from Afghanistan: The London Conference," http://afghanistan.hmg.gov.uk/en/conference/outcomes/; and Federal Government, "Afghanistan Conference confirms the validity of the German strategy," 29 January 2010, http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_6538/Content/EN/Artikel/2010/01/2010-11-29-ergebnisse-afgh-konferenz__en.html.

Unlike Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, Germany requires an explicit mandate from the lower house of parliament – the Bundestag – before German troops can be sent on military missions abroad. As a result, German participation in ISAF and OEF is widely seen as being particularly susceptible to domestic political pressures. In addition to concerns about the impact of combat operations on stabilization and reconstruction efforts, and about exposing German troops to greater risks, German politicians and the public are also particularly averse to accepting the possibility of civilian casualties in ISAF and OEF combat operations. Germany's top military official resigned and the Minister of Defence was reassigned in 2009 amid media allegations that they withheld information from parliament regarding Germany's role in an airstrike which resulted in civilian casualties.

There are currently 4,280 German troops in Afghanistan, making Germany the third largest contributor of military personnel to ISAF (as of 22 December 2009). At the London Conference of January 2010, the German government announced that the total deployment could rise to 5,000, subject to parliamentary approval. The current German contingent is composed of troops equipped and trained for stability operations but not for combat and who are deployed in northern Afghanistan, where Germany runs two PRTs – in Kunduz (since October 2003) and Feyzabad (since September 2004). Germany has been the "lead nation" of ISAF Regional Command North, which is responsible for five PRTs. Germany has six Tornado reconnaissance planes stationed in Mazar-e-Sharif. It has announced plans to expand its role in training the Afghan National Army (ANA) by increasing the number of personnel it has dedicated to this mission from the current 280 to 1,400. Thirty-four German service personnel have been killed in Afghanistan.

With a total financial commitment to reconstruction and development of C$1.8 billion by 2010 and bilateral debt forgiveness of C$107 million, Germany is Afghanistan's third largest bilateral donor. Bilateral aid to Afghanistan accounted for 1.9% of ODA in 2007–2008, making it Germany's 5th largest recipient of bilateral aid. These figures may increase substantially in the future, as the German government has proposed almost doubling its current aid commitment to Afghanistan to C$651 million over the next four years. German development cooperation has focused on building and strengthening governance structures and human resource capacity and has concentrated on four areas: energy (in particular, renewable energy), drinking water, sustainable economic development, and primary education. Other areas of development cooperation are the rule of law, human rights, the improvement of the status of women and girls, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Germany has been Afghanistan's "key

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partner" in the area of police training and capacity-building, but its efforts have been criticized as ineffective. In mid-2007, the European Union took over the lead in this area, and the German project was transferred to the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan.

5. France

French policy places much less emphasis on multi-dimensional engagement strategies that link security, good governance, and reconstruction and development than do the policies of Canada, the Netherlands and others.[13] France also focuses more explicitly and exclusively on security, especially in its contribution to efforts by the international community. France has taken a robust approach to ISAF and OEF, arguing that the two are closely linked and that the focus of the Alliance's involvement should be on stabilization and on fighting terrorism and the drug trade. Although France supports international efforts in the areas of reconstruction, governance and development, and while it is active on a bilateral level in these areas as well, it does not support the view that NATO should or can be effective in all these areas. France does not have a PRT and "does not believe that PRTs can play a meaningful role in Afghanistan."[14] The deployment of troops to military missions abroad does not require a parliamentary mandate or debate. However, the National Assembly has some influence through its control over budgetary matters.

France now contributes nearly 3,750 personnel to ISAF. This includes 280 military personnel dedicated to training the Afghan army and special forces (a priority area for France), as well as 540 personnel deployed at ISAF's Regional Command Capital in Kabul. France has also played a leading role in securing Kabul Afghanistan International Airport, a mission to which the country has committed approximately 800 troops. In partnership with the ANA, France has deployed 600 personnel to a joint-service battle group to conduct an area control mission in Kapisa province. In 2007, France moved six fighter jets from Tadjikistan to Kandahar. The jets are being used in "intelligence and close air support missions,"[15] including in support of Canadian ground forces. About 400 French troops are deployed with OEF in Afghanistan and the region. Thirty-nine French military personnel have been killed in Afghanistan.

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13 Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following French government websites: Ministère des affaires étrangères et européenes, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr; French Embassy in Afghanistan, http://ambafrance-af.org/france_afghanistan/spip.php?rubrique2; Ministry of Defence, http://www.defense.gouv.fr/defense_uk; and Agence Française de Développement, http://www.afd.fr.

14 Morelli and Belkin (2009), p. 29.

15 Ibid., p. 28.

The Afghan mission has played an important role in France's reassessment of its NATO policy. Since 2001, France has increasingly supported the Alliance's shift to a focus on "out-of-area" responsibilities.[16] Also, at NATO's April 2009 meetings of heads of state and government in Strasbourg, France, and Kehl, Germany, France formally rejoined NATO's integrated command structure.[17] France continues to be fully committed to supporting ISAF and OEF efforts in Afghanistan. During his November 2007 visit to Washington, French President Nicolas Sarkozy told Congress: "France will remain engaged in Afghanistan as long as it takes, because what's at stake in that country is the future of our values and that of the Atlantic Alliance."

France's focus on security is also reflected in its level of ODA spending. As Afghanistan's 13th largest bilateral aid donor, France ranks below the other countries discussed here, as well as the United States and Canada. With respect to bilateral aid, Afghanistan was not one of the top 15 recipient countries of French ODA in 2008.[18] This fact reflects France's regional development assistance focus on Africa, which accounts for 12 of its 15 top aid recipients. Nevertheless, France has made considerable contributions to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan in various areas, including humanitarian assistance, counter-narcotics activities, the training of judges and the establishment of the Afghan Parliament, as well as in health care and agriculture.

6. Italy

Notwithstanding its very considerable contribution of troops to ISAF, Italy appears to have taken a more restricted and low-key approach to its involvement in Afghanistan relative to Canada and the United Kingdom.[19] Although the Italian government recognizes the

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16 Ibid., p. 29.

17 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Strasbourg – Kehl Summit strengthens Transatlantic Link and looks at NATO's future challenges," News release, 4 April 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52845.htm.

18 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Stat Extracts, "Total Net ODA," http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=REF_TOTALODA.

19 Much of the information in this section was drawn from the following Italian government websites: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Afghanistan*, http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/Politica_Estera/Aree_Geografiche/Asia/Rapporti_Bilaterali/Afghanistan.htm; and Ministero della Difesa [Defence ministry], http://www.difesa.it/. Information on Italy's role in justice reform was taken from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Conference on the Rule of Law in Afghanistan*, "Italy and Justice Reform," http://www.rolafghanistan.esteri.it/ConferenceRol/Menu/I_rapporti_bilaterali/Cooperazione+culturale/.

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need for a stronger international effort in all areas – "security, governance, socio-economic development, regional cooperation, human rights protection and counter-narcotics"[20] – it does not appear to have an integrated or whole-of-government approach to its mission in Afghanistan. Instead, it has focused on its military mission in western Afghanistan and its involvement in rebuilding and strengthening the judicial system.

From 2001 to 2008, Italy contributed approximately C$645 million in development assistance, with aid reaching about C$120 million in 2008 alone. Bilateral aid to Afghanistan accounted for 1.8% of Italian ODA in 2007–2008, making Afghanistan the 2nd largest recipient country of Italian bilateral aid. Italy's reconstruction and development efforts have focused on governance, in particular the judicial system, as well as on infrastructure projects. Italy has been the lead donor country in the international community's efforts to rebuild and strengthen the Afghanistan justice sector, and in July 2007, Italy hosted a Conference on the Rule of Law in Afghanistan,[21] which secured about US$360 million in pledges from international donors.

There are approximately 3,150 Italian troops in Afghanistan, including army, air force and Special Forces personnel. Italy is the lead nation in Regional Command West and is responsible for the PRT in Herat province.

The Italian government has continued to resist pressure from some NATO allies to lift the restrictions on the use of Italy's forces outside their current area of deployment (for example to assist ISAF forces in combat operations in the south). It has indicated that local commanders have the freedom to deploy troops in an emergency situation in support of ISAF partners, but it is uncertain that commanders would act without first seeking approval from Rome. Twenty-two Italian service personnel have been killed in Afghanistan. At the end of 2009 media reports suggested Italy was considering increasing its deployment by as many as 1,000 troops.[22] It is unclear whether this means an increase in the number of troops currently deployed or rather a continuation of the temporary deployment of units sent to assist in providing security for the 2009 Afghan presidential elections.

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20 Statement by Massimo d'Alema, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy, Meeting of the UN Security Council, 20 March 2007.

21 Proceedings and other documents are available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Conference on the Rule of Law, website at http://www.rolafghanistan.esteri.it/ConferenceRol.

22 Alan Cowell, "Italy May Add 1,000 Extra Troops in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 3 December 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/04/world/europe/04reax.html.